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Senate

Statement of Senator Dianne Feinstein

“Only Two Months to Act Before the Assault Weapons Ban Expires”

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Ten years ago, I introduced an amendment to the crime bill which banned the manufacture and sale of semiautomatic military-style assault weapons. Senator Schumer, then a Member of the House, a member of the Judiciary Committee, introduced the same amendment in the Judiciary Committee. We were both successful. It passed the Senate, passed the House, was signed into law by President Clinton.

Over the past 10 years, gun traces to semiautomatic military-style assault weapons have decreased by two-thirds. The ban has worked. But 2 months from today, the Federal ban will expire. Once again, new guns such as the Tec-DC9 will flood our streets. If you don't know what a Tec-DC9 is, I am going to

show you. This is Gian Luigi Ferri, who walked into 101 California Street and killed six people, wounding eight. And this is the Tec-DC-9 he was carrying with a 30-round clip. He had 250 rounds in additional clips with him. He is dead here, shot on the floor, but not until after he had either killed or wounded 14 people. The ban will expire despite overwhelming public support to renew it.

Seventy-one percent of all Americans support renewing the ban. So do 64 percent of people in homes with a gun. The ban is going to expire despite overwhelming support from law enforcement and civic organizations. As you can see, nearly every major law enforcement and civic organization in our country supports renewal:

the Fraternal Order of Police, the Chiefs of Police, the United States Conference of Mayors, National Association of Counties, and on and on.

The ban will expire despite the stated public support of President George W. Bush and Attorney General John Ashcroft. As you can see from this letter, the administration has reiterated its official support for renewing the ban time and time again. From the Department of Justice:

“As the President has stated on several occasions, he supports the reauthorization of the current ban.”

And the ban will expire despite the support of a majority of Senators, 52. Despite all of this, it looks

more and more likely that the National Rifle Association will win. The ban will expire, and the American people will once again be made less safe.

Although President Bush has said he supports the ban, the White House has refused to lift a finger to help us pass the renewal. They are instead playing political hot potato with the Republican leaders in Congress.

The Hill newspaper, on May 12, said that “an aide to [the Speaker] has said privately that if the President pushes for it, the ban will probably be reauthorized. But if he doesn’t, the chances...are remote.”

The Boston Globe reports that a White House spokesman said “Bush still supports the ban but is waiting for the House to act.”

So the House will act only if the President asks them, and the President will act only if the House passes it. It is a classic catch-22.

One month ago, June 14, three former Presidents wrote to President Bush. Presidents Ford, Carter, and Clinton took the extraordinary step of writing a joint letter to President Bush asking him to work to renew the ban and offering their assistance to do so. Let me read just part of it:

“We are pleased that you support reauthorization of the...Assault Weapons Act, which is scheduled to expire in September. Each of us, along with President Reagan, worked hard in support of this vital law, and it would be a grave mistake if it were allowed to sunset.”

It goes on and expresses what this law means. I could not agree more. We cannot go back to those days. We know these guns are used by gangs, by criminals, by grievance killers, by troubled children to kill their schoolmates. We also know from al-Qaida training manuals that al-Qaida has recommended that its members travel to the United States to buy assault weapons at gun

shows. Why? Because it is so easy to do so.

As the threat of terrorism around the world increases, how can we let the ban expire and make it that much easier for terrorists to arm themselves with military-style weaponry? And make no mistake, gun manufacturers and sellers are keeping a close watch.

In mid-April, Italian customs seized more than 8,000 AK-47 assault rifles on their way from the Romanian Port of Constanta to New York and then to Georgia. These guns had a value of more than \$7 million.

Of course, shipping assembled AK-47s would be illegal under the ban and under a 1989 Executive order of the first President Bush that banned certain guns from importation. But according to ATF, importing these guns so they can be disassembled, sold for parts, and then reassembled would not be illegal, and now purchasers will be allowed to reassemble these guns into their banned form. This

shipment was not an isolated example.

Here is an advertisement from Armalite, a company that makes post-ban rifles. As we can see from this advertisement, they are offering a coupon for a free flash suppressor for anyone who buys one of these guns so that on September 14, once the ban is expired, the gun can be modified to its pre-ban configuration. What do you need a flash suppressor for? If you have a flash suppressor on a gun and a 30-round clip in it and you are shooting at night at the police or at neighbors, you can't see where the gun flashes. The flash is suppressed. So if you are a criminal, you may need one. If you are a legitimate citizen, you don't.

This is the kind of thing we can expect, just 2 months from now: Companies gearing up to once again produce the deadly assault weapons, the high-capacity clips which are now banned, clips, drums, or strips of more than 10 bullets, and dangerous

accessories we worked so hard to stop 10 years ago.

I hope that, before September 13, the President and the Congress can find the courage to stand up to the NRA, to listen to law enforcement all across the Nation who know that to ban these guns makes sense and saves lives.

Listen to the studies that show that crime with assault weapons of all kinds has decreased as much as 66 percent. The bottom line is that everyone knows this ban should remain law, but time is running out. We have 14 legislative days. Will the House of Representatives step up to the plate and find an opportunity to give the House an opportunity to vote to renew the military-style assault weapons legislation?

I ask unanimous consent to print the following editorials in the Record.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.